United Nations E/2008/SR.1

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

7 February 2008

Original: English

Organizational session for 2008

Provisional summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 14 January 2008, at noon

Temporary President: Mr. Čekuolis ..... (Lithuania)
President: Mr. Mérorès ..... (Haiti)

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Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

08-20589 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 12.05 p.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Temporary President** declared open the organizational session for 2008 of the Economic and Social Council.

Statement by the Temporary President

2. **The Temporary President** said that the Council was well on its way to becoming the primary Charter body in the area of development, as envisaged by the founding Members of the United Nations. In 2007, it had taken on new functions and had strengthened its convening role, particularly through the Annual Ministerial Review. The Reviews were expected to improve the Organization's capacity to engage a wide array of national and international development policy makers and other stakeholders, including those working at the grassroots level. The first Review — on strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development — had featured national voluntary presentations from six developing countries. The fact that a large number of developing and developed countries had volunteered to make national presentations at the 2008 Annual Ministerial Review was testimony to the success of the 2007 Review.

3. Throughout the year, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations, Member States and the private sector had provided important insights into effective strategies to combat poverty and hunger. At the 2007 Civil Society Development Forum, non-governmental organizations had elaborated a set of specific recommendations on poverty and hunger which had enriched intergovernmental discussion at the Council's high-level segment. Other events included the Annual Ministerial Review Innovation Fair, which had showcased innovations for facilitating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and the launch of the Development Cooperation Forum. The engagement of Member States in the preparation of both the Forum and the Annual Ministerial Review had been — and would continue to be — critical.

4. The Council had adopted a multi-year work programme for the Annual Ministerial Review and had made significant efforts to improve coordination with its functional commissions. With regard to efficiency gains in the coordination segment, it was the Council's understanding that the segment would follow up on the implementation of the previous year's Ministerial Declaration. Remaining challenges included adapting the work of the general segment so that the Council could offer effective policy guidance. The Organization needed to strengthen its engagement in the general segment; resolutions needed to be streamlined; and duplication with the General Assembly needed to be minimized. The Council would continue searching for ways to improve its working methods so that the consideration of reports from its subsidiary bodies in the general segment would be of benefit.

5. Despite the Council's successes during the 2007 session, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in many countries was far from assured. While the response to the Council's new functions augured well for its future, it needed to go beyond structural changes and lead the way to the realization of the Goals.

Election of the President

6. **The Temporary President** said that, under rule 18 of the Council's rules of procedure, in 2008 it was the turn of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to nominate a candidate for President. Consequently, he would take it that the Council wished to elect Mr. Léo Mérorès (Haiti), who had been nominated by the Group, to the post of President.

7. *Mr. Mérorès (Haiti) was elected President by acclamation.*

8. *Mr. Mérorès (Haiti) took the Chair.*

Statement by the President

9. **The President** welcomed the Secretary-General and expressed appreciation for his support of the Council's work and his determination to strengthen the Organization's development pillar.

10. He noted that his own country, Haiti, had a special relationship with the Council and expressed appreciation to the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti for its assistance in elaborating a long-term development strategy.

11. As a citizen of a small island developing State, he attached particular importance to the theme of the 2008 Annual Ministerial Review, "Implementing the agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable

development". By providing a forum for the integration of the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development, the Council and its functional commissions could play an important role in furthering the understanding of the link between climate change and social and economic development. A productive and action-oriented 2008 Annual Ministerial Review would be an important first step in realizing that role. He looked forward to constructive discussions with the eight countries that had volunteered to make national presentations during the 2008 Review.

12. The biennial Development Cooperation Forum would meet for the first time in 2008. The preparatory process and the Forum itself would contribute to the 2008 Doha Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, particularly in the area of international financial and technical cooperation for development. The preparatory process was also expected to contribute to a renewed global consensus on aid quality and architecture, including national ownership and leadership. In January 2008, a high-level symposium aimed at strengthening the voice of developing country actors in the global debate on the promotion of strong national ownership and leadership would be held in Cairo.

13. One of his presidency's chief goals was to increase the participation of all stakeholders in the substantive session. He hoped that civil society would contribute to the Council's work through the Civil Society Development Forum, which elaborated recommendations to be presented to Governments during the substantive session, and through the Innovation Fair.

14. The Council would continue to play its role in peace and security and emergencies. The Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on Haiti, Burundi and Guinea-Bissau had demonstrated the advantages and challenges of an integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding. The Council should ensure that the Peacebuilding Commission benefited from the Advisory Groups' experience and that it incorporated economic and social dimensions in its work.

15. The 2008 meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was expected to make a significant contribution to the Doha Conference. The members of the Council should use that opportunity to convey their views to the institutional stakeholders.

16. In conclusion, the international community had underscored the Council's important role in the United Nations system and had endowed it with new responsibilities. The members of the Council must work towards building a stronger, more effective Council and ensuring the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.

Statement by the Secretary-General

17. **The Secretary-General** said that 2007 had been a landmark year for the Council, which had operationalized its important new functions, as mandated by the 2005 World Summit. He expressed sincere appreciation to the outgoing President, who had led the Council in its pursuit of greater accountability, stronger coherence and broader engagement through the first Annual Ministerial Review and the launch of the Development Forum. He was confident that the new President and Bureau would ably steer the Council in advancing implementation of the United Nations development agenda and wished to assure them of his full support and that of the entire Secretariat.

18. Development for all remained the central challenge for the United Nations and for the international community as a whole. That challenge covered everything from the eradication of poverty to the reduction in child mortality and from preventing malaria to ensuring that more children attended school. Development was also about correcting gender inequalities, increasing employment opportunities for young people, and addressing the challenges of migration, water scarcity and climate change. While there had been some visible and widespread development gains since the endorsement by world leaders of the Millennium Declaration in 2000, such as the decrease between 1990 and 2004 in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty from nearly one third to less than one fifth, development disparities within countries were increasingly worrisome, and, given the likelihood of a downturn in the global economy in 2008, even tougher challenges might lie ahead for the least developed countries. In confronting those challenges, the focus must be on achieving results. In spite of the difficulties, the United Nations development agenda, especially the Millennium

Development Goals, could be achieved if immediate steps were taken to implement existing commitments.

19. Africa must be the priority. Despite recent improvements in growth and economic stability across the continent, absolute poverty in sub-Saharan Africa had risen over the previous decade. While there were pockets of progress, not a single country in the subregion was on track to achieve the Goals by the target date of 2015. To address that alarming situation, the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group had been working hard since the previous September to mobilize the full resources of the United Nations system and its partners. Together with the President of the General Assembly, he planned to convene a high-level meeting on the Goals in September 2008 to find ways to bridge the implementation gap. In the run-up to the April 2008 UNCTAD-XII Conference in Accra and the November 2008 Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Doha, close attention must be paid to systemic issues of trade, investment and finance.

20. As the poorest countries were also among those most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, progress was needed on the negotiations launched in Bali. The international community would be looking to the United Nations to act on the mutually reinforcing relationship between climate goals and development objectives. He looked forward to the Council's contribution to that effort at the 2008 Annual Ministerial Review on "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development".

21. Responding to the many global inter-linked challenges required collective action and international cooperation. In 2005, world leaders had called on the Council to promote greater coherence among the activities of various development partners, to strengthen links between the normative and operational work of the United Nations and to ensure adequate follow-up to major United Nations conferences. The leaders had further stressed the need for the Council to address humanitarian emergencies and to help coordinate the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies. The Council was indeed in a unique position to forge closer ties with all actors, including civil society and the private sector, and to maximize the potential of the United Nations system to serve the needs of humanity. The first Development Cooperation Forum, to be convened in July 2008, would be critical to the performance of those functions. He expressed confidence that the Forum would pave the way for an inclusive framework to address the latest trends in development cooperation and the critical issues of aid quality and quantity.

22. Development was as important as the United Nations work for peace and human rights and those three areas of the Organization's activities were mutually reinforcing. That was why he intended to work over the next year to strengthen the role of the United Nations in development. He had listened to the concerns of Member States in that regard and planned to submit a proposal to the General Assembly in March 2008 for strengthening the Organization's development machinery. The General Assembly would soon begin work on system-wide coherence, including on the question of gender architecture. The Organization must deliver as one at the country, regional and global levels in virtually every area of its work. In 2015, it must be able to say that it had done everything possible to follow through on its commitments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Council had a critical role to play in ensuring that the Goals were achieved and that the global development agenda was advanced. He urged the international community to redouble its efforts as it worked together to create a better, more peaceful and more prosperous world for all.

Election of the Bureau

23. **The President** said that rule 18 of its rules of procedure provided for the Council to elect four Vice-Presidents. He took it that the Council wished to elect the candidates nominated by each regional group.

24. *Mr. Kim (Republic of Korea), Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus), Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), and Mr. Lima (Cape Verde) were elected Vice-Presidents of the Council for 2008 by acclamation.*

25. **Mr. Blake** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group wished to convey its sincere gratitude to the outgoing President and Vice-Presidents for advancing the objectives of the Council, and in particular the operationalization of its new and strengthened mandate. The Group looked forward to the Council building substantially on its achievements

in 2008 and to the effective realization of its development-oriented objectives.

26. **Ms. Štiglic** (Observer for Slovenia), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Council had taken some historic steps in the past year by holding its first Annual Ministerial Review and launching the Development Cooperation Forum. Adopting its two-year programme of work for the Review had been another important step in strengthening the Council. Remaining challenges included the continued timely selection of the Review teams and the adaptation of the Council's work. The European Union looked forward to working with the new Bureau and with the wider United Nations membership on those issues.

27. The European Union also thanked the outgoing Bureau for its excellent work and its contribution to the strengthening of the Council. It congratulated the outgoing President for his personal dedication and commitment and reaffirmed the Union's commitment to the important work of the Council.

28. **Mr. Hart** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the Community aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The year 2007 had been marked by the great progress made in implementing the reforms decided on at the 2005 World Summit and in General Assembly resolution 61/16, which CARICOM fully supported. The successful presidency of Lithuania during that difficult period for the Council had clearly demonstrated the enormous value of small States to the multilateral process.

29. The convening of the first Annual Ministerial Review and the launching of the Development Cooperation Forum at the 2007 substantive session represented important milestones towards the full restoration of the role envisaged for the Council in the Charter. CARICOM remained committed to working within the Council to realize that goal. The primacy of development in the global agenda must be assured, for development should never be relegated to a position of subordinate importance to other issues. Rather, it must be seen as a key priority of the international community, on a par with other critical issues, and in that regard, the Council had a vital role to play.

30. **Mr. Bellerive** (Haiti) expressed the gratitude of the Government and people of Haiti, which had been honoured with the presidency of the Council for 2008. The Government was particularly appreciative of the activities of the Council's Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, which through its reports had alerted the international community to the urgent need for comprehensive, long-term engagement in order to ensure social and economic development and prevent a return to conflict in that country.

31. With the participation of the Government and civil society, Haiti now had a national growth and poverty reduction strategy that would be the best roadmap for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The access to funding under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative afforded by the implementation of that strategy would greatly facilitate poverty reduction as well as the attainment of some of the other Goals.

32. Haiti was assuming the presidency of the Council at a critical time for the institutional machinery of the Organization and for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In implementing the provisions of the 2005 Summit, the Council had truly transformed its institutional structure with the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum. The combined action under those two mandates would strengthen its global management of the development agenda as called for in General Assembly resolution 61/16. Despite the progress made towards achievement of the goal of reducing by half the number of people suffering from malnutrition and hunger, much remained to be done and it was doubtful whether the target could be achieved by 2015. The thematic debate on achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which had been convened by the President of the General Assembly for April 2008, would therefore be very timely. The Government of Haiti was prepared to contribute to the collective effort needed on the part of the United Nations to meet the challenges presented by that bold agenda.

Elections, nominations, confirmations and appointments

Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission

33. **The President** said that under the terms of Council resolution 2006/3 and its decision 2006/201 B, members elected by the Council to the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission would

serve a term of office expiring on 22 June 2008, or until the expiration of their membership in the Council, whichever came first. Brazil's membership in the Council had expired on 31 December 2007. However, in light of its re-election to the Council for a new term of office, the Chairman of the Latin American and Caribbean States Group had advised that Brazil had the endorsement of the Group to continue as a member on the Peacebuilding Commission through 22 June 2008. He took it that the Council wished to re-elect Brazil to the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission for a term expiring on 22 June 2008.

34. *It was so decided.*

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (E/2008/2)

35. **The President** invited the Council to adopt the provisional agenda for its 2008 organizational session, contained in document E/2008/2.

36. *The provisional agenda was adopted.*

37. **The President** recalled that in its resolutions 1988/77, 1989/114, and 2006/206, the Council had decided to adopt certain measures to revitalize and improve its functioning. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 45/264, 48/162, 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B, and 61/16, had also taken important steps to restructure and revitalize the Council. On the basis of the guidelines given in those resolutions, the Council would have before it for consideration at its organizational session the annotated provisional agenda (E/2008/2) and the note by the Secretary-General containing the proposed basic programme of work of the Council for 2008 and 2009 (E/2008/1).

38. In conformity with the provisions of paragraph 2 (1) of Council resolution 1988/77, informal consultations would be held on the proposed basic programme of work and on the other matters requiring action by the Council at its current organizational session. At its organizational session in February, the Council would also hold elections and appointments to the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters. Further details would be announced in the Journal.

39. Turning to the question of seating arrangements for delegations, he proposed that, as in the past, lots should be drawn to determine which delegation would occupy the first seat.

40. *The delegation of Japan was selected by the drawing of lots to take the first seat.*

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations E/2008/SR.2

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

21 February 2008

Original: English

Organizational session of 2008

Provisional summary record of the 2nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 5 February 2008, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Mérorès ..... (Haiti)

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Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*)

Elections, nominations, confirmations and appointments (*continued*)

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08-22767 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*) (E/2006/70, E/2006/87, E/2007/22, E/2008/1, E/2008/2 and E/2008/L.1)

1. **Ms. de Laurentis** (Secretary of the Council) drew attention to corrections to the proposed provisional agenda for the substantive session contained in section I of document E/2008/1 and to an informal paper containing the list of issues before the organizational session of 2008.

The meeting was suspended at 10.30 a.m. and resumed at 10.35 a.m.

Report of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/2007/22)

2. **The President** drew attention to the report of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on its thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh sessions (E/2007/22). He took it that the Council wished to take note of the report.

3. *It was so decided.*

Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies: draft annex relating to the World Tourism Organization (E/2006/70)

4. **The President** said that he would consult with the Bureau regarding the timing of the Council's further consideration of the draft annex on the privileges and immunities of the specialized agencies with respect to the World Tourism Organization, bearing in mind Council decision 2007/247.

Application of an intergovernmental organization for observer status with the Council (E/2006/87)

5. **The President** said he took it that the Council wished to further defer consideration of the application of the International Emergency Management Organization for observer status with the Council to a later date.

6. *It was so decided.*

Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters

7. **The President** said he took it that the Council wished to defer its consideration of the question of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters to a later date.

8. *It was so decided.*

Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development

9. **The President** drew attention to the proposal to include a discussion on promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development as part of the work of its substantive session of 2008. Delegations were requested to hold informal consultations as soon as possible so that a proposal could be presented to the Council for action by the end of the week.

10. **The President** drew attention to the draft proposals contained in document E/2008/L.1, submitted by the Bureau on the basis of informal consultations held pursuant to paragraph 2 (I) of Council decision 1988/77.

Draft decision I: Proposed date of the special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

11. *Draft decision I was adopted.*

Draft decision II: Provisional agenda for the substantive session of 2008 of the Economic and Social Council

12. *Draft decision II, as orally revised, was adopted.*

Draft decision III: Basic programme of work of the Economic and Social Council for 2009

13. **The President** said he took it that the Council wished to take note of the list of questions for inclusion in the programme of work of the Council for 2009.

14. *It was so decided.*

Draft decision IV: Working arrangements for the substantive session of 2008 of the Economic and Social Council

15. *Draft decision IV was adopted.*

16. **The President** said that the division of responsibilities for the 2008 substantive session would be as follows: high-level segment and dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions — Ambassador Léo Mérorès of Haiti (President of the Council); coordination segment — Ambassador Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima of Cape Verde; operational activities segment — Ambassador Andrei Dapkiunas of Belarus; humanitarian affairs segment — Ambassador Kim Hyun Chong of the Republic of Korea; general segment — Ambassador Jean-Marc Hoscheit of Luxembourg.

Draft decision V: Theme for the 2008 thematic discussion of the Economic and Social Council

17. **The President** said that informal consultations would be held on draft decision V.

Draft decision VI: Operational activities segment of the 2008 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

18. *Draft decision VI was adopted.*

Draft decision VII: Theme for the humanitarian affairs segment of the 2008 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

19. **The President** said that informal consultations would be held on draft decision VII.

Draft decision VIII: Theme for the item on regional cooperation of the 2008 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

20. **Mr. Blake** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that regional cooperation was of particular interest to the Group of 77; since it had not had sufficient time to review the draft decision prior to the meeting, it wished to request a brief suspension.

21. *It was so decided.*

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11:35 a.m.

22. **Mr. Blake** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group would like to have the theme in writing so that it could consider it with the seriousness it deserved. It hoped to be in a position to report back to the Council by the end of the week.

23. **The President** said that the Secretariat would circulate the exact wording of the theme. He took note of the fact that the Group of 77 and China would report back to the Council by the end of the week at the latest on the outcome of its consultations.

Possible joint event of the operational activities and humanitarian affairs segments

24. **The President** said that the Council would revert to the matter at a later date.

Elections, nominations, confirmations and appointments (*continued*) (E/2008/9 and E/2008/9/Add.1)

Commission for Social Development

25. **The President** said that the Group of Eastern European States had endorsed Slovakia to fill the outstanding vacancy in that Group on the Commission for Social Development. He took it that the Council wished to elect Slovakia by acclamation to the Commission for a term beginning on the date of election and expiring at the close of the Commission's forty-ninth session in 2011.

26. *It was so decided.*

27. *Slovakia was elected a member of the Commission for Social Development.*

Committee of Experts on Public Administration

28. **The President** said that, as a result of the death of Mr. Dennis Rondinelli of the United States of America, a vacancy had arisen in the Committee of Experts on Public Administration. He took it that the Council wished to approve the nomination by the Secretary-General of Ms. Jennifer Dorn of the United States of America, who would serve on the Committee in her personal capacity for a term beginning immediately and expiring on 31 December 2009.

29. *It was so decided.*

Resignation of three members of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters

30. **The President** drew the Council's attention to document E/2008/9/Add.1, in which the Council was advised of the resignation of three members of the

Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, namely Mr. Pascal Saint-Amans of France, Ms. Patricia Brown of the United States of America and Mr. Nobuyuki Nakamura of Japan. The Secretary-General had decided to appoint Mr. Christian Comolet-Tirman of France, Ms. Liselott Kana of Chile and Mr. Robin Oliver of New Zealand to complete the terms of office of Mr. Saint-Amans, Ms. Brown and Mr. Nakamura.

31. He took it that the Council wished to take note of the three new appointments made by the Secretary-General.

32. *It was so decided.*

Resignation of a member of the Programme Coordination Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

33. **The President** said that Norway had recently resigned from the Board and that the Group of Western European and other States had endorsed Denmark to complete the unexpired portion of Norway's term. In the absence of any other candidate, he took it that the Council wished to elect Denmark to complete the unexpired portion of Norway's term of office, beginning immediately and expiring on 31 December 2008.

34. *It was so decided.*

35. *Denmark was elected a member of the Programme Coordinating Board of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.*

The meeting rose at 11:40 a.m.

United Nations E/2008/SR.3

Economic and Social Council

Provisional

15 February 2008

Original: English

Organizational session for 2008

Provisional summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 8 February 2008, at 4 p.m.

President: Mr. Mérorès ..... (Haiti)

Contents

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*)

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08-23034 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*) (E/2008/2 and E/2008/L.1)

1. **The President** drew the Council's attention to the draft proposals contained in document E/2008/L.1, submitted by the President and members of the Bureau on the basis of informal consultations.

Draft decision V: Theme for the 2008 thematic discussion of the Economic and Social Council

2. **Mr. Hoscheit** (Luxembourg) said that the proposed theme for the 2008 thematic discussion, which has been agreed upon during informal consultations, was the following: "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development, taking into account current challenges".

3. **The President** said he took it that the Council wished to adopt the aforementioned theme proposed for the 2008 thematic discussion.

4. *It was so decided.*

5. **Ms. Ghosh** (Observer for Slovenia), speaking on behalf of the European Union, welcomed the agreement reached on the 2008 thematic discussion and the flexibility shown by all those involved. At the same time, the European Union believed that the periodicity of the thematic discussion should be re-examined in the future with a view to further strengthening the Council, increasing the participation of ministers throughout the high-level segment and balancing the workload between New York and Geneva.

6. **Mr. Blake** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, welcomed the agreement on the need for thematic discussions in principle. However, in order for thematic discussions to be meaningful in practice, it was also important that such discussions should address current challenges as and when they arose. In that context, the documentation being prepared for the discussion of rural development should also address the current financial crisis that had arisen. Lastly, since thematic discussions provided a framework that enabled the Council to take any major developments into account, a debate on their periodicity was not likely to prove useful.

7. **Mr. Heidt** (United States of America) said that the broad term "current challenges" could encompass a number of different financial issues. Since there was little documented evidence that the current financial market instability in developed countries would have a direct impact on markets in developing countries, the Secretariat should maintain its focus on areas with a more demonstrated direct link to rural development issues.

8. **Ms. Houngbedji** (Benin) emphasized that the Council should hold thematic discussions every year and that there was no need to discuss the issue of their periodicity.

9. **The President** informed the Council that, in the light of the explanations provided by the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Hoscheit of Luxembourg, and the decision just adopted, the discussion on "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development", called for in decision 2007/213, would thus take place during the high-level segment of the Council's 2008 substantive session.

Draft decision VII: Theme for the humanitarian affairs segment of the 2008 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

10. **The President** said that he had invited the Vice-President of the Council, Mr. Kim Hyun Chong of the Republic of Korea, to conduct informal consultations on the theme for the humanitarian affairs segment of the 2008 substantive session of the Council. Once the relevant recommendations had been provided for the Council's consideration, Mr. Kim would be in a position to convene informal consultations on the theme.

Draft decision VIII: Theme for the item on regional cooperation of the 2008 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

11. **The President** said he took it that the Council agreed that the theme for the item on regional cooperation of the 2008 substantive session should be "The regional dimension of the themes of the high-level segment for 2008".

12. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.